



CONNECTICUT  
BIRTH TO THREE SYSTEM

PRESCHOOL SPECIAL  
EDUCATION

WORKING TOGETHER FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

# BIRTH through 5 NEWS

INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES AND PROFESSIONALS • VOLUME 4, NUMBER 3

## Parent Training Supports Children's Learning

By Nancy Prescott, Executive  
Director, Connecticut Parent  
Advocacy Center, Inc. (CPAC)



*This article is translated into Spanish on  
page 2. Ver la versión española de este  
artículo en la página 2.*

Produced by the State  
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System in Collaboration with the



University of  
Connecticut

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SYSTEM  
College of Agriculture and Natural Resources

Wouldn't it be great if there were a place in Connecticut where parents of children with disabilities and the professionals who work with them could call for information and support? A center that is staffed by parents who have "been there"? A resource where you could get your questions answered – for free? There is such a place: **The Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center (CPAC)**, a parent training and information center.

CPAC is part of a national network of Parent Training and Information Centers (PTIs) that affect the daily lives of children and youth with disabilities.

Whether it's a three-year-old in Georgia who cannot walk,

a ten-year-old in Texas squirming through social studies class, or a young woman with mental retardation seeking a job in Montana, parent centers are there to help. PTIs serve families of children and young adults from birth to age 22 with all disabilities: physical, intellectual, learning and emotional. They:

- Train and inform parents and the professionals who work with them;
- Help families obtain appropriate education and services for their children with disabilities;
- Work to improve educational results for all children;
- Resolve problems between families and

schools or other agencies;

- Connect families of children with disabilities to community resources that address their needs.\*

Nearly twenty years ago, Parent Training and Information Centers were written into federal special education law. At that time Congress recognized that parents needed additional information and support if they were to participate in their children's education at all—much less participate in a meaningful way as the law intends. The purpose of PTIs has always been to prepare parents to be effective advocates for their children with disabilities. With evolving special and regular education law that can be complex and confusing, the need for parent training has become more and more clear.

The outcomes of parent training are significant. Parent training builds skills and self-confidence, thereby increasing the effectiveness of a parent's advocacy efforts on behalf of his or her child.

Through workshops and information sessions, parents learn from one another and have the opportunity to model and practice new behaviors. They learn to problem solve and communicate more effectively with the providers who work with their children. Parents hear what has worked for others and learn to navigate the educational system and help make it work for their child. They are better able to determine whether or not their child is making progress. Parent training decreases isolation, connects parents with other parents and providers, and expands their sphere of influence in their communities. In-service training for

\*From "Why Parent Centers?" Technical Assistance ALLIANCE for Parent Centers, PACER Center, Inc., January 2000.

providers offers insights into the parent's perspective and helps in educational team building.

PTIs continue to be funded by the US Department of Education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Each state has at least one parent center and states with large populations have more. There is currently a network of approximately 100 parent centers. We at CPAC are proud to be part of that dynamic network.

The Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center believes that:

- Every child has the right to an appropriate education;

- Parents can be effective advocates for their children if they are given the information and support they need;
- Parent involvement is crucial for the appropriate education of children with disabilities.

Indeed, the U.S. Congress agrees: "Over 20 years of research and experience has demonstrated that the education of children with disabilities can be made more effective by... strengthening the role of parents and ensuring that families of such children have meaningful opportunity to participate in the education of their children at school and at home..." (Public Law 105-17, The 1997 Amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act).

At CPAC, our experience demonstrates that one way to strengthen that role is through education, and that the earlier a parent gets involved in his or her child's education, the stronger the foundation for increased "meaningful participation" in the future.

CPAC Consultants are available daily to take your calls and to offer guidance and information. We can be reached at (800) 445-2722. Parent training on a variety of topics related to special education is also available free of charge. Call us for a brochure and a listing of our workshops. Visit our website at [www.cpacinc.org](http://www.cpacinc.org). Se habla español.

## La capacitación de los padres como apoyo al aprendizaje de los niños

*Por Nancy Prescott, Directora Ejecutiva Centro de Connecticut de apoyo a los padres (CPAC)*

¿No sería bueno que hubiera en Connecticut un lugar donde los padres de niños con incapacidades y los profesionales que trabajan con ellos pudieran acudir para información y apoyo? ¿Un centro con personal integrado por padres "que han estado allí"...? ¿Un lugar donde a usted le contestaran sus preguntas – gratuitamente? ¡Ese lugar existe! Es el Centro de Connecticut de apoyo a los padres (CPAC), un centro de capacitación y de información para padres.

CPAC es parte de una red nacional de Centros de capacitación e información para padres (PTIs) que afectan la vida cotidiana de niños y jóvenes con incapacidades. Trátese de un niño de tres años en Georgia que no puede caminar, o de uno de diez años en Texas que se retuerce en la clase de estudios sociales, o de una mujer joven con atraso mental que busca trabajo en Montana, los

Centros están allí para ayudar. Los PTIs prestan servicios a familias con hijos desde recién nacidos hasta de 22 años de edad con toda clase de incapacidades: físicas, intelectuales, de aprendizaje, e emocionales. Esos centros:

- capacitan e informan a los padres y a los profesionales que trabajan con ellos;
- ayudan a las familias a obtener educación y servicios apropiados para sus hijos con incapacidades;
- trabajan para mejorar el aprendizaje de todos los niños;
- resuelven problemas entre las familias y las escuelas u otras agencias;
- conectan las familias de niños con incapacidades con los recursos de la comunidad con posibilidad de atender a sus necesidades.\*

Hace casi veinte años la ley federal de educación especial incorporó a los PTIs. A la sazón el Congreso reconoció que los padres necesitan información y apoyo adicionales para poder participar en la educación de sus hijos del modo significativo que pretende la ley.

\* De "¿Centros para padres para qué?" Asistencia técnica ALLIANCE para los Centros para Padres, PACER Center, Inc, enero 2000.



Siempre ha sido el propósito de los PTIs preparar a los padres para que puedan abogar por sus hijos con incapacidades. Con una ley de educación especial y regular en evolución que puede ser compleja y confusa, se ha hecho cada vez más clara la necesidad de capacitar a los padres.

Son notables los resultados de la capacitación de los padres. Esa capacitación crea en ellos habilidades y confianza en sí mismos, con el consiguiente incremento de la eficacia de sus esfuerzos al abogar por sus hijos. En talleres y sesiones de información los padres aprenden unos de otros y tienen oportunidad de modelar y practicar nuevos



tratos. Aprenden a resolver problemas y comunicarse mejor con los proveedores que trabajan con sus hijos. Los padres escuchan lo que ha funcionado con otros y aprenden a navegar el sistema educacional y cómo lograr que sea eficaz con sus hijos. Quedan mejor preparados para determinar si su hijo progresa o no. La capacitación de los padres disminuye su aislamiento, los conecta unos con otros y con sus proveedores, y amplía su esfera de influencia en la comunidad. La capacitación de los proveedores les ayuda a comprender la perspectiva de los padres y a constituir equipos educacionales.

Los PTIs continúan recibiendo fondos del Departamento federal de Educación bajo la Ley de Educación de Individuos con Incapacidades (la 'I.D.E.A.'). En cada estado hay por lo menos un Centro para padres y en los estados de mayor población hay varios

más. Actualmente hay una red de aproximadamente 100 Centros para padres. En el CPAC estamos orgullosos de ser parte de esa dinámica red.

Es convicción del Centro de Connecticut de apoyo a los padres (CPAC) que:

- todo niño tiene derecho a una educación apropiada;
- los padres pueden abogar eficazmente por sus hijos si se les da la información y apoyo que necesitan;
- la participación de los padres es crucial en la educación apropiada de los niños con incapacidades.

El congreso de Estados Unidos está de acuerdo: "Más de 20 años de investigación y experiencia han demostrado que la educación de los niños con incapacidades puede hacerse más eficaz... reforzando el papel de los padres y asegurando que las familias de tales niños tienen adecuada oportunidad de par-

ticipar en la educación de sus hijos en la escuela y en el hogar...;" (Ley 105-17, Enmienda de 1997 a la Ley de Educación de Individuos con Incapacidades). En CPAC nuestra experiencia prueba que un modo de reforzar ese papel es mediante la educación, y que mientras más temprano se involucren los padres en la educación de sus hijos más se refuerza el fundamento de una futura "participación significativa."

Los consultores de CPAC están a su disposición todos los días para atender sus llamadas y ofrecerles guía e información. Se puede comunicar con nosotros al (800) 445-2722. La capacitación de los padres en varios temas relacionados con la educación especial está también disponible sin costo. Llámenos para folletos y lista de nuestros talleres. Visite nuestro 'website' en [www.cpacinc.org](http://www.cpacinc.org). Se habla español.

## Birth to Three and Preschool Special Education Update

By Linda Goodman and Maria Synodi

**T**raining for parents and family members that goes beyond the information that parents receive from service coordinators or teachers is always on our minds. We spend a great deal of time listening to parents and gaining information that helps us identify needs and provide an array of training opportunities for parents and professionals. We make every effort to include our training and workshop events, and those of other agencies and organizations, in the *Birth Through 5 News* newsletters. So... where do many of these training events listed in *Birth Through 5 News* come from?

Many training opportunities come from us. Annually, the Birth to Three System and Preschool Special Education fund an early childhood calendar of training and workshop oppor-

tunities. All of the training sessions are open to families and professionals. The training topics cover a wide range of interest areas including assistive technology, autism, behavior, brain development, early literacy, mathematics, nutrition and speech. The Birth to Three System and Preschool Special Education contract with the **Special**



**Education Resource Center (SERC)** to provide the trainings and workshops. Our partner, SERC, works with us to coordinate these events. SERC does a terrific job of advertising those sessions, both in a booklet that they distribute across the state, as well as on their website ([www.ctserc.org](http://www.ctserc.org)). If you access the SERC web site, click on "Professional Development" and type in *early childhood* as a search topic. Registration fees for events are usually nominal. Parent fees can often be waived at the parent's request.

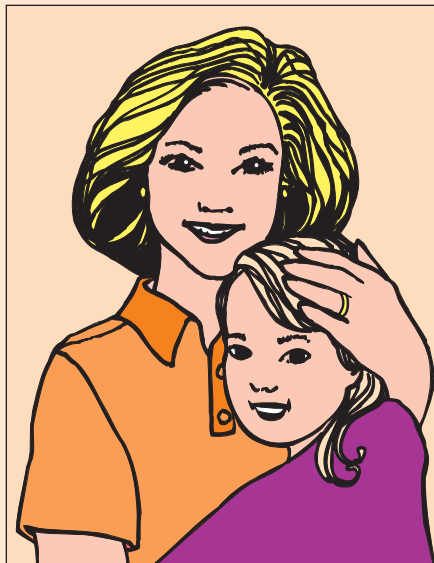
In addition, the **Department of Education**, in collaboration with SERC, sponsors a series of workshops for a "Families as Partners" initiative. Those topics are also listed on the SERC website and include additional topics such as transition to kindergarten, sleep disorders, and challenging behaviors.

If you would like a copy of the Early Childhood or Families as Partners training calendars, contact SERC at (860) 632-1485 or [www.ctserc.org](http://www.ctserc.org).

The Connecticut Parent Advocacy

Center (CPAC) also provides training throughout the state. The feature article describes many of CPAC's activities. One activity of interest to this issue is the training known as Next Steps (Support and Training for Educators and Parents). The training includes 8 weekly, 3-hour sessions. For information on the times and locations of the training, contact CPAC at (800) 445-2722 or via their website at [www.cpac-inc.org](http://www.cpac-inc.org). You can also email CPAC for more information at [cpac@cpacinc.org](mailto:cpac@cpacinc.org).

A major training event funded by Birth to Three and Preschool Special Education, the "Together We Will" conference is scheduled for April 11 and 12, 2003 at the Sheraton in Danbury, CT. The conference topic is "Cultural Competence." On April 11, speakers will address how early intervention and early childhood programs can infuse the values of cultural competence into all aspects of their work. **Marci Hanson**, author of "Developing Cross –



Cultural Competence: A Guide for Working with Young Children and Their Families," will be a featured speaker. This conference is open to families and professionals. Saturday will focus on how families, including those from various backgrounds and cultures, can assume leadership roles and work effectively with early intervention and early childhood programs. **Cherie Takemoto** is the keynote speaker on Saturday. Cheri is a parent of a child with a disability as well as the Director of the Parent Training and Information Center in Virginia. Parent waivers for the conference and parent stipends are available upon request. Contact SERC at (860) 632-1485 or via their web site at [www.ctserc.org](http://www.ctserc.org) for information and a registration form. Looking forward to seeing everyone at the conference in April.

#### OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT

Revisions to the next federal application for Birth to Three funding are now posted at [www.birth23.org](http://www.birth23.org) and available at each Birth to Three program, independent living centers, DMR central and regional offices, CT Parent Advocacy Center and Parents Available to Help. Comments can be sent until April 10, 2003 via the website or by fax [(860) 418-6003] or mail (460 Capitol Ave., Hartford, CT 06106).

## Interagency Coordinating Council Meetings

The Birth to Three Interagency Coordinating Council works to advise and assist the Connecticut Birth to Three System in managing its responsibilities under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). All Council meetings are open to the public with a scheduled period for public comment on each agenda. Recent focus areas include: Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder, Family Involvement, Legislative Involvement, Community Based Learning Opportunities and Birth Through Five. Council Meetings are scheduled as follows:

April 14  
June 9  
August 11  
October – to be determined  
December 8

Come and observe, or share suggestions for improving supports for families. Directions and more information may be found at [www.birth23.org](http://www.birth23.org) under State Interagency Coordinating Council.

## SICC Update

By Ann Gionet

### FAMILY PARTICIPATION IN TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Two parent members of the State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) are active members of the Birth to Three Mentors Program. The mission of this program, which began in 2001, is to provide information and support to families entering the Birth to Three System. In addition to increasing knowledge, skills and confidence, participating families can become better advocates for their children and help shape the Birth to Three System.

Members of the SICC Family Involvement Committee organized several training opportunities this past year. During trainings, families played dual roles as presenters and participants. As presenters, they brought examples of their successes and struggles. As participants, they learned relevant information and networked with others who navigated similar situations. Family participation in all levels of training provides information and support that results in better training experiences for all.

## Local ICCs Train Parents and Providers in the Community

By Eileen McMurrer

Looking for answers on how to get your preschooler to follow directions? Do you want information to give to the Mom of a toddler struggling with nutrition issues? Wouldn't it be great if your infant slept through the whole night for a change? Well, suggestions for dealing with problem behaviors, nutrition, sleep disorders and many of life's challenges are available from your Local Interagency Coordinating Council (LICC).

LICCs are independent groups of parents, providers and community members who meet to plan activities that benefit families of children to age six with developmental delay or disabilities, and the professionals who coach them in meeting their goals. Currently there are twelve active LICCs covering many towns around Connecticut. Even if there isn't an LICC in your town, most events are open to other residents. Speakers come from around the country and neighboring towns to meet the local need for information.

Transition—whether from Birth to Three into preschool special education or other community activities, or out of preschool into kindergarten—is a process that confuses many folks. Trainings offered by LICCs help to make these important transitions more understandable by bringing families and school district staff together, face-to-face. Most trainings are scheduled in the evening and many provide

refreshments and a stipend for mileage or childcare.

Health and childcare providers can be LICC members and also the focus of LICC trainings. Among the many LICC activities that benefit the larger community are trainings for childcare providers on how to design inclusive activities for

children with differing abilities and how to inform doctors about when to make a referral to Birth to Three or to Preschool Special Education.

How do LICCs know what topics to choose for a training event? They need to hear from you! Send suggestions for future trainings to your LICC Chair or the Child Development Infoline [(800) 505-7000]. Contact information for your Local Interagency Coordinating Council may be found on the Birth to Three System website at [www.birthe23.org](http://www.birthe23.org) or by calling the Child Development Infoline. Parents and providers are encouraged to come to trainings even if they cannot always come to LICC meetings. Look for announcements of future LICC training events on the Birth to Three website and in this newsletter. Then come! And learn new answers to life's questions.



## “SNIPPETS”

### The Parent Perspective

## Parent Training Helps Parents and Children

By *Carmina Cirioli*

**W**e always said we wanted three children and close in age. We have three boys, ages 7 1/2, 6 1/2 and 5 1/2.

Carl, our 6 1/2-year-old, was born a month premature and was in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit for four days. When we brought him home, we read about what he should be doing at particular ages. When Carl seemed to

be a month delayed we thought that this was normal because he was premature. However, as the months went on, he became more and more delayed. At each visit we voiced our concerns with the pediatrician. At Carl's 15-month checkup, she told us about the Birth to Three System. We gave our consent to have him evaluated, and sure enough, he qualified.

We were very open to having providers come into our home. We felt that they would be helping our son and that we would be learning too. Our service coordinator was very tuned in to what

we wanted and needed. Every month she gave us information about programs and activities in the area. One day I received a letter about an eight-week training on being an advocate, not only for our child, but for other families as well. This training was very informative. I felt much more confident going into my son's Planning and Placement Team meeting with the school district.

A few months later, our service coordinator was at our house and gave me a flyer about another training—the Birth to Three Mentors Program. This program provides family leadership opportunities at all levels, improves the quality of services and helps shape the Birth to Three System. The mentors are parents that are or have been involved in the Birth to Three System. They have participated in training designed to help them support new referrals, teach parents more about the System, guide them to activities and community resources, and support their participation. My husband and I wish that when



we entered the System we'd had a mentor to talk to about our concerns.

When I called about the mentor training, I found out that there was a position available in the South Central Region as the Regional Coordinator. I jumped on it. I knew that I would be learning so much more for the benefit of my family and for the other families that I would be encountering. I have been meeting some wonderful parents and professionals and hope to be meeting many more.

For more information on the CT Birth to Three Mentors Program, call (800) 399-7284 or (203) 459-4687.



## The Provider Perspective

### Parent Training Empowers Parents

By Carmen Torres

I became associated with Mrs. Carmina Lizardi of the Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center (CPAC) through a workshop on Special Education entitled "What Parents Need to Know." The topic interested me since I am a parent of a child with special needs and was frustrated that the school was not meeting my son's educational needs.

After the workshop I talked with Mrs. Lizardi about my concerns. Immediately she arranged to meet with me to help me understand my son's Individualized Education Program (IEP), communicate with the school and acquire the services that he so desperately needed.

My relationship with Mrs. Lizardi does not end there. It extends in a much broader sense to my job. I work as a Parent Liaison in the New Haven Public Schools. Mrs. Lizardi has done workshops on many special education topics that have given parents the tools needed to help them ask questions. Like me, many of these parents have felt frustrated, alone and helpless.

I remember in one of the health fairs that I set up for my schools, a parent brought her IEP. Mrs. Lizardi immediately began to help her. These services are empowering tools that help parents of children with special needs attain the services that will provide a better future for their children. Knowing that an organization like CPAC exists, and has providers like Mrs. Lizardi who

are sensitive to the needs of parents and children, empowers parents to initiate the search to provide for children with the educational opportunities they deserve.

Thank you CPAC and Mrs. Lizardi on behalf of the many parents that you have helped.



## We Need Your Ideas and Opinions

Please help us plan trainings and newsletter topics by responding to this brief survey. Place an X by the topics that most interest you.

- \_\_\_ Helping children learn to communicate
- \_\_\_ Managing child behavior in a positive way
- \_\_\_ Reading books with children
- \_\_\_ Playing with children
- \_\_\_ Working with providers in your child's life
- \_\_\_ How children grow and develop
- \_\_\_ Food and nutrition information
- \_\_\_ Support groups for parents

Two other topics of interest are:

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The first 200 respondents to this survey will receive a gift of appreciation for their participation.

Please mail, fax or e-mail your responses to:  
**Debbie Burke, CPAC, 338 Main Street, Niantic, CT 06355, fax (860) 739-7460, dburke@cpacinc.org**

*Thank you.*

## TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR FAMILIES AND PROVIDERS

### Orientation to the Birth to Three System

Linda Goodman, Director  
Connecticut Birth to Three System  
April 7 8:45 AM – 12:00 Noon  
Rensselaer, Windsor St., Hartford  
No fee

### Involving Families in the IFSP

Tina Giddings  
May 8 8:45 AM – 4:00 PM  
Rensselaer, Windsor St., Hartford  
No fee

For more information, or to request a registration form for the above, see the Birth to Three website:  
[www.birth23.org](http://www.birth23.org) or call Kathy Granata at the Birth to Three System at (860) 418-6146.

### The 10th Annual Conference: Together We Will Support Cultural Competence

Keynote Speaker: Marci Hanson  
San Francisco State University  
Friday, April 11  
Danbury Sheraton Hotel  
\$45 fee (parents may request a fee waiver)

### Together We Will with Families

Keynote Speaker: Cherie Takemoto of the Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center in Arlington, VA  
Saturday, April 12  
Danbury Sheraton Hotel  
\$15 fee (parents may request a fee waiver)

### From Goals to Data and Back Again: A Summer Seminar and Computer Lab on Working with Young Children with Disabilities

Rebecca Klaw and Jill Lehman  
Thursday and Friday, June 26 and 27  
SERC, Middletown  
\$60 fee (parents may request fee waiver)

### Research Implications: Current Information for Practitioners Working with Children and Youth with Autism Spectrum Disorders

Ami Klin of the Yale Child Study Center  
Tuesday, April 8  
Rensselaer, Windsor St., Hartford  
\$45 fee (parents may request fee waiver)

### Social and Communication Interventions for Young Children with Autism: A Summer Institute

Kathleen Quill of The Autism Institute  
Essex, MA  
Tuesday and Wednesday July 29 and 30

For more information or to request a registration form for the above see the SERC website: [www.ctserc.org](http://www.ctserc.org) (professional development) or call Jenn Sharpe at SERC at (860) 632-1485 x268.

## BIRTH through 5 NEWS

### Information for Families and Professionals

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# Essential Allies: Families as Advisors

## PARENTS AS TRAINING PARTNERS

### Some Ways Families Can Partipate

- \* Determine training needs
- \* Design and produce training programs
- \* Conduct training programs
- \* Receive training
- \* Evaluate training

### Key Practices

- \* Involve families who represent a wide range of experience
- \* Make the process accessible
- \* Pay families for partipating
- \* Offer supports

(Adapted from *Parents as Training Partners*, Project Copernicus)



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